

Shuffle

by papalogia

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Summary: Of all the ways that Lucy had expected to introduce herself to her neighbour, having him save her from sliding off her balcony while trying to figure out what music was he was listening to was not one of them.

Shuffle

**A/N: **A request-fic from Tumblr that I figured I may as well migrate over to my ffn account due to sheer length. I hope you all enjoy reading!

* * *

><p>Lucy was certain that what she was doing was in equal parts stupid and probably illegal.<p>

Nevertheless, curiosity overrode common sense and the blonde found herself sitting on the railing of her balcony and stretching her arm out into her neighbour's balcony. Her feet were hooked under the small table in the corner in a weak attempt to stay stable, and her free hand was squeezing the metal divider so hard she was certain there would be indents once she let go.

It was at times like these she was grateful her father had forced her into gymnastics when she was younger.

"Come onâ€|" Lucy mumbled, trying hard not to drop her phone as she raised her thumb and hit the big blue 'S' button in the middle of her screen.

Shazam immediately got to work, little blue lines pulsing as the app sought to figure out just exactly what was playing next door.

A small part of Lucy wondered why she didn't just walk the five steps

it took to get to his place and knock and ask, but then Lucy remembered what Laxus had once said about Bixlow going to his neighbour's asking for sugar and had left with half his head shaved and decided that perhaps this was for the better. Besides, it would be totally awkward to just show up out of nowhere and ask about his playlist. On one hand, she could blame it on the fact that the walls in her shitty apartment were thinner than rice-paper, but on the otherâ€¦well, there wasn't anything on the other hand.

"What're you doin'?"

Lucy screeched, nearly dropping her phone and her legs in shock. She slammed her extended arm into the divider for added upper-body balance and swung her legs back till the heels of her feet dug into the balcony rail. A warm arm braced itself against her back, helping keep her steady.

"Shit, lady! You okay?" her neighbour asked, concern evident in his eyes.

His very dark green eyes. Lucy swallowed thickly, unsure if the dryness in her throat was a by-product of her near-death experience or the result of finally laying eyes on her ridiculously attractive neighbour.

He had pink hair, and Lucy could tell it wasn't a dye-job (after Laxus's first three back in middle-school, she had become quite adept at picking them out). His skin was tan and he had two visible scars; one on his neck, and another that ran up his cheek and stopped a few inches short of his eye.

He was hot as fuck, and _he was touching her_.

"Y-yeah! Sorry!" Lucy stammered, sliding off the railing and landing on her feet. The pink-haired man had yet to drop his arm from her back, and the psychology major found she had no real objections to the fact.

Now that she was stable, there was nothing stopping her from taking in the rest of him. He wore an off-white wife-beater that did his biceps endless justice, and his pants rode low enough that she was able to catch just a hint of a v-cut from the gap between said pants and his shirt.

"-anyway?" Lucy shook herself out of her stupor. "Iâ€¦huh?"

"I said, 'what were you doing leaning out like that anyway?'" he repeated slowly.

Lucy fumbled for a moment before saying, "Selfie Sunday. My friend Juvia texted me saying that the whole squad was going to take a moderately risky selfie and post it on Instagram. So, uhâ€¦I decided to sit on the rail."

Thankfully, he seemed to buy it. The boy burst into laughter, dropping his arm and wrapping it around his waist. Lucy missed the warmth of his arm for only a second before the warmth of his voice swept over her. It was like honey and hot tea, and she hoped the blush on her face could be explained away by adrenalin.

"That's weird. I mean, Gajeel's done stupider shit, but still. Hey, how about we get one together and you can tag me?" he grinned, his sharp white teeth flashing in the sun. "To commemorate."

Lucy could only nod and open her camera feature, pressing the button that would cause it to face them and held it out at arms length. She swore her heart jumped to her mouth when he draped his arm over the shoulder closest to him and held up a peace sign against her collarbone. Shaking it off, Lucy put on her signature smile and hit the button.

"That doesn't look half bad," he said, peering at the screen. "I mean, the lighting is weird 'cause of the sun, butâ€¦"

"That's where these apps come in handy," Lucy explained, running the photo through one of her favourites and tapping away. "I'll just fix the lighting and post it. What's your name?"

"You know, it's polite to introduce yourself before asking other people's names, but you're a weirdo so I guess I can let this slide. My name is Natsu. Natsu Dragneel."

Lucy twitched. "I meant your Instagram name, but that works, too. My name is Lucy Heartfilia."

"My Insta name is charizardsass," he said. "Hey, I think I know you from somewhereâ€¦did we have a class together or something? Wait, we totally did! First year English with Professor Geer!" Natsu slammed his fist into an open palm. Lucy blinked, and her jaw dropped when she realized he was right.

Shit, he lived next to her?

Lucy knew she could be unobservant at times but this was on a whole new level.

"Oh, wow, yeah! Professor Geer really did not like you," and now she wanted to slap herself silly. What in hell was she-

"Yeah, it's 'cause my older brother kind of wrote a really scathing article in response to Professor Geer's thesis at the time," Natsu chuckled, rubbing the back of his head. "Guess the grudge carried over."

"Yupâ€¦" Lucy nodded, posting the photo. The two stood there in silence for about a minute before she blurted out, "Hey, what's that song playing right now in your house? It's got a catchy beat."

"Oh! _Buttons _by The Pussycat Dolls," Natsu replied. At Lucy's raised eyebrow, he threw his arms up defensively. "What? They're good. _Buttons_ and _Dontcha _were masterpieces."

Lucy giggled. Thisâ€¦wasn't going as badly as she had expected it to. Not only had she made nice with her incredibly attractive neighbour, but she had also found out what the song was. If she were alone, she would have patted herself on the back for a job well done.

"Alright, I gotta head back in. This foundations of legal theory essay isn't going to write itself," Natsu rolled his neck, waving goodbye as he turned around. "See ya around!"

"Bye, Natsu!" Lucy called.

Once safely back inside her apartment, Lucy unlocked her phone and refreshed her Instagram feed. Unsurprisingly, the notifications had blown up on her newest photo.

**rainwoman **__LUCY BETTER ANSWER HER DOOR WHEN JUVIA COMES OVER
THERE ARE THINGS TO BE DISCUSSED_

The comments followed a similar line of speech, up until she came to Natsu's comment.

**charizardsass **__my neighbour is a weirdo_

He was a fan of Ghibli movies, too?

Oh,_ hell._

* * *

><p>Natsu was in a pickle.<p>

Not the kind of pickle that he liked being in, either. No, this was the kind of pickle that left him unable to concentrate on anything for longer than two minutes and led to homework completion at three in the morning because staring at the work before him was too much of a struggle.

Just what on Earth was she playing today?

His neighbour's music choice had always intrigued him. As a fan of mostly EDM, alternative rock, and whatever else played on the radio, he was surprised to note that instead of being annoyed at whatever soft beat was emitting from her house, he quite enjoyed it. This song in particular had helped him doze off more than once when he was unable to sleep, but he had no idea what it was called and it was starting to bother him.

So Natsu found himself on the sofa, where the sound was the loudest, debating how he could go about asking her for the title and artist without seeming too creepy.

They were...well, declaring them friends was being generous considering that they'd only really had two or three conversations since he'd prevented her from falling off her balcony. Acquaintances. There. They were acquaintances, and Natsu wasn't sure if that was a level of 'knowing-each-other' wherein it was acceptable to ask what they were listening to at the moment.

Would DM-ing her on Instagram be too creepy? He pinched his arm. Of course it would be creepy!

'Hey Lucy, what song are you listening to right now? It helps me sleep, not that I've been listening to your music at all, nope!'

Ugh, he was horrible at this.

It totally didn't help matters that she was cute as fuck. He had

noticed her back in first year when he had sat a row behind her in English, and between her ridiculously meticulous notes and the way her eyes lit up and she positively vibrated in her seat when she began to discuss something she was passionate about in the assigned work, it was safe to say that Natsu had developed a bit of a crush on her. It had slipped out of his mind come second year when he had moved off campus to a cheap apartment complex, but when he had seen her the other day leaning into his balcony, it had come crashing back into him with the combined force of a bullet train and a 747.

"Fuck me and my entire existence," he grumbled, scrolling through his Instagram feed. There was nothing special, really. Erza had successfully baked Jellal a cake for his birthday (had he posted his well wishes on his Facebook wall?), Gray uploaded a Fullbuster family photo from his trip up north, Gajeel was apparently in writing a new song, if his caption lyrics had anything to say about it...

Caption lyrics.

Natsu felt like hitting himself.

Of course! He could post a selfie with the lyrics to this song and wait until Lucy made a comment and then he could ask her! The plan was nothing short of pure, unadulterated genius.

The law major slid down his sofa, angling himself so the sun hit his hair in a way that he knew would highlight the various darker reds that cropped up occasionally, and lifted his phone higher before closing his eyes and snapping away. He struck several different poses, saving the more silly ones for himself, before picking the nicest one and running it through one of Instagram's default filters.

Natsu hit the upload button with a grin and tossed his phone off to the side to concentrate on his essay.

Professor Invel had absolutely zero chill when it came to deadlines, and Natsu was not willing to be on the receiving end of one of his world famous lectures.

When Natsu lifted his head and rolled his shoulders, he was amazed to see that night had fallen. The clock informed him that it was close to ten at night. He had been typing for over seven hours straight. Figuring that was enough law for one day, he shut his screen and picked up his phone, tapping the little camera icon on his notifications bar.

Two hundred likes and fifty-one comments. Not bad. He went through them, absent-mindedly formulating replies in his head. His thumb froze over the screen when he saw Lucy's comment hidden between Gray's and Zeref's.

`**luckylucy **__I didn't know you were a fan of Adele!_`

Natsu blinked. Adele? As in the same singer who did 'Skyfall' and 'Hello'? How had he not recognized it as her?

`**charizardsass **__luckylucy lol I guess, I keep hearing this song from your apartment, guess it got stuck in my head_`

_**luckylucy**__ OHMYGOD I AM SO SORRY HAVE I BEEN BOTHERING YOU?
I'll keep it down I swear! This one is 'Turning Tables' fyi
:)_

Natsu grinned. Bingo. Now he knew what the song name was and she was none the wiser.

_**charizardsass **__luckylucy nahhh keep it loud I don't mind
:P_

Now that that whole mess was clarified, he could go to bed with a clear mind. A little pop-up on his phone caught his eye before he dozed off.

_**igneeldragneel **__OOOOOH NATSU IS
FLIRTINGGGGGG_

_**metallicmess**__ lmaooo igneeldragneel ya boy done grown up she's
cute too eh_

Scratch that. He had a nosy father and uncle to slaughter first.

* * *

><p>"This is actually such a struggle," Lucy groaned. Next to her, Juvia rolled her pretty blue eyes and continued to measure out the ingredients they needed for black forest cake.<p>

With Levy's birthday just around the corner, at least two hours a day had to be spent on party preparations. This year, Lucy and Juvia had been tasked with catering (after last year, Erza and Jellal were banned from ever stepping foot into the kitchen alone together) and the two best friends were going all out. Juvia was the best cook and baker in their friend-circle, so anything that was being made was guaranteed to taste like heaven. The biggest issue the two had encountered was what kind of cake they were to bake, and how many tiers it would have. Eventually, they had decided on a three-tiered black forest cake.

"Juvia thinks that Lucy should just go next door and ask what is playing instead of moping around," the kinesiology major chimed. Lucy shot her a terrified look, dropping the bottle of vodka in her hands. "Are you crazy? That's way too bold! I barely know the guy and he's really hot and I look like a mess right now and-"

"Lucy!" Juvia scolded. "Look! The bottle is broken! How are we supposed to make the whipped cream and icing now?"

Lucy wilted. She had spent over thirty dollars on that one bottle and her bout of stupidity had caused it to literally go down the drain. Juvia squatted, picking up the larger pieces gingerly and placing them in one of the many plastic bags in the lower cupboards. "Lucy, go next door and ask Natsu-san if he has any vodka. Juvia cannot make the icing and whipped cream without the vodka!"

Lucy's brows furrowed. "Juvia, I don't see why we can't just make that stuff without it...I mean, it's not like all icing and whipped cream has booze in it."

"Because it's Levy's nineteenth birthday and we must celebrate her

being able to drink legally with an alcoholic cake! Go!" Juvia shooed her out. Lucy scurried out of the kitchen, unwilling to disobey her. The last time someone (namely Laxus) had thought to ignore her demands, they had ended up nursing several bruised ribs and an even more bruised ego. Granted, it was warranted given that they had eaten her spinach pie before she could finish it.

It had taken five minutes before Natsu made it to his door, and Lucy was once again struck by how amazing he seemed to look even when wearing an over-sized sweater and the ugliest orange shorts she had ever been forced to look at. "Oh, hey, Lucy! What's up?"

"Vodka," she blurted out. Natsu's green eyes stared at her on confusion. "Uh...you wanna go out for drinks with me...?"

The blonde was certain that the fates had it in for her that day. For someone who could bullshit essays the night before and still get solid 90's, Lucy's grasp on the English language and all that it entailed disappeared from under her feet the second she needed it most. Somewhere in the dark recesses of her mind, she could almost hear Sting hissing about Murphy's Law.

"Um, no-" Natsu's face fell slightly, and she quickly amended, "I mean, I'd love to get drinks with you sometime! Justâ€|well, to give it some context, I dropped my bottle of vodka and I was wondering if you had some on hand? We're baking a cake."

"Yeah, sure, come on in," Natsu waved her in. His living room wasn't as messy as she had expected it to be. There were several thick books open and covered in sticky-notes, and his laptop displayed an essay that was clearly in the works. Lucy stepped around the various knick-knacks that covered his floor, ranging from a dented sword to a framed twenty-dollar bill. He was the type to collect trinkets, then. It was kind of cute how the mess seemed organized, too. Papers and the like were gathered together, and anything with metallic properties were loaded off to another corner.

"Won't baking the cake just, I dunnoâ€|evaporate the vodka?" Natsu asked as he came out of his kitchen. He held a blue bottle of a more premium brand than she had purchased, and she winced. From what she could remember from Cana's ramblings, that bottle was worth at least a solid eighty.

"Um, yeah, but this is for the icing and whipped cream," she mumbled as she accepted the offered vodka. It was full and unopened. "Natsu, you haven't even opened this! Take it back, I'll just go-"

Natsu wrapped his hand around hers where it grasped the neck of the bottle. Lucy felt her cheeks redden at the sudden contact. His face was earnest as he said, "No, it's fine! I'm not really a big drinker, so I might as well put it to good use. Hey, if you really feel bad about this, how about you buy the first round of drinks for us?"

Lucy nodded. The two stood there in silence, their hands still touching, with the only sound being that of whatever was playing on his laptop. She found herself slowly becoming more and more comfortable in his presence, and just the thought of going out for drinks with him later was enough to get her heart picking up pace.

Had she developed a crush on him so quickly?

The logical part of Lucy, the one that was honed by years of psychology classes, reasoned that it wasn't uncommon for crushes to develop on virtual strangers so quickly. It was a biological imperative. The raw, emotional part of Lucy, the one that was honed by years of just existing and interacting with people, found that it was understandable that she had. He was funny, cute, intelligent, and had a killer taste in music. Suddenly, Lucy felt emboldened.

"Hey, what's playing right now? It's got a nice beat."

Natsu brightened, his entire face lighting up like a candle at night. "Oh! It's _DNA_ by Little Mix. You wanna stay and finish listening? It's gonna wind up soon, anyway."

Lucy smiled shyly. "Yeah, I can stay."

* * *

><p>Natsu was having one of those nights.<p>

He scrolled through his Instagram feed listlessly, double tapping photos he had already liked, before switching to Netflix and running through his list. He had already watched everything at least twice. He checked all of his emails again and then switched to Snapchat and cleared the updated stories without really watching them all.

Another two AM spent awake.

There was no homework to do, nothing else he could study, nobody to talk to, and nothing to help knock him out.

Sighing, he made his way out to the balcony, falling into his lounge chair with a sigh and staring at the sky with bored eyes. God, he wasâ€|bored didn't really describe it. He hated breaks with a passion because they always ended up screwing with his sleep cycle, and it would take close to a month to fix it, even if he cut all sources of caffeine from his diet.

Just as he was about to move to the kitchen to stick his head in the freezer in the hopes that the cold would help make him drowsy, the softest sounds of a piano made itself known to him.

He smiled.

Lucy was up, too.

He hadn't really spoken with his neighbour-turned-friend since their outing for drinks last week, but he was in deep. His crush on her had gotten bad, to the point of which people were starting to notice. While his entire friends group wasted no time in teasing him like the five-year-olds they were, it was only Mest who had clapped him on the shoulder and wished him good luck.

"Natsu?" Lucy called quietly from her side. Natsu stood up, walking over to the railing and leaning on it. His head touched the divider, and he could feel the heat from where she was mirroring him. "You're

up a lil' late, eh, Luce?"

She laughed. "Can't sleep either?"

"Nope."

"Ah."

Natsu closed his eyes once he heard her humming. She wasn't the best singer by any means, but he found her voice was a nice addition to the piano. A blanket of fatigue fell over him, and he yawned, managing to somehow speak at the same time. "Hey, Luce. What's playin' on your end?"

"_Forever and Always_," he could hear the smile in her voice. "Sorry, my vocals are killing it, and not in the good way."

"No, I like it," he interrupted her. "Keep going."

As Lucy continued to hum along to the song, Natsu hesitantly reached his hand out to brush against hers from where he could see it. The law major bit his cheek nervously when she didn't stop or take notice. Was he being too touchy?

His heart nearly stopped when she linked her pinky with his.

Smiling so broadly he was sure his cheeks were going to split, all he could do was squeeze their linked fingers and hold back an exuberant laugh when he felt her respond in the like.

* * *

><p>"It could be a ransom demand," Juvia finally said. "Containing Laxus-san's toe as proof of life."<p>

Juvia yelped when Lucy yanked a strand of her hair. She pouted, rubbing her head. "Why is Lucy so mean to Juvia?"

"Juvia, what kidnapper would go so far as to gift-wrapping a box with a human body part in it?" Lucy asked. Juvia shrugged. "It could be their aesthetic."

"You've been on tumblr way too much."

"Juvia knows."

The two focused their attention back to the small box on the table before them. It had been on Lucy's doorstep when she had gone to go and check the mail, and she had spent all of ten minutes debating whether or not it contained some sort of movement-triggered bomb on the inside (she blamed Laxus and his habit of watching nothing but crime procedurals with her) before picking it up and bringing it inside. Juvia had wasted no time in throwing out wild theories as to the contents.

"I'm opening it," Lucy finally declared. Both girls tensed once the wrapping paper had been neatly pulled off ("For later use," Juvia had chimed) and the box was left bare to the world. Lucy cut open the flaps and pulled out the glittery tissue paper. "If this actually does have a toe in it, then we have got possibly the most glitzy

kidnappers in the world on our hands."

Fortunately, Lucy did not end up pulling out her brother's bloody toe. Rather, in her hands lay an iPod Nano, pink in colour with little jewels spelling out her name on the back.

"Juvia hasn't seen one of these things in years!" she cooed. While Lucy made quick work of turning it on, Juvia focused on reading the accompanying card.

"Oh, it's from Natsu-san! It says it has all of his favourite songs on it," Juvia's expression turned devious. "Natsu-san made Lucy a mixtape! He likes you!"

"S-shut up!" Lucy stammered. "It's not the 90's! He probably did it so I'd stop bothering him about what's playing in his apartment."

That thought sent a spike of pain through her chest. Was this his way of politely asking her to stop talking to him about music? She couldn't imagine not being able to bond with her secret crush over whatever his latest favourite song was. She couldn't imagine not getting into increasingly stupid situations just to ask him what the title was.

She couldn't imagine not hearing him laugh, or seeing him smile and get excited over his music, or accidentally brushing hands with him in ways that would make her pulse skyrocket and her face go bright red.

"This is odd," she heard Juvia say. "Don't most playlists alphabetize the songs? These are all out of order!"

Lucy looked down. Juvia was right. Will It All End In Smoke came before Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds, after which Please Don't Stop The Music, Go The Distance, Out Of Nowhere, With Your Love, and Me and Marie were the only tracks that made up the playlist, and they were all out of alphabetical order. The most common link between them was that they were all love songs.

Juvia gasped softly. "Oh, Natsu-san is goodâ€¦!"

Lucy shot her best friend a confused look. "Huh?"

Juvia rolled her eyes and pinched her cheek affectionately. "For someone who is normally very observant, Lucy can also be very stupid sometimes. Read the first word of each title."

So Lucy turned back to the screen and read them aloud. "Will Lucy please go out with me."

The psychology major froze and mouthed out the sentence again.

Will Lucy please go out with me.

"Juvia thinks that Lucy should close her mouth before she eats a fly," she said slyly. "And Lucy should also go tell Natsu-san 'yes', because if Lucy won't, then Juvia will."

Somehow, between the shock and giddiness that had overtaken her, Lucy

managed to find enough sense to grin.

"No, Juvia, I have a better idea. Where's my old 4G?"

* * *

><p>Natsu opened his door and was greeted with his blushing crush holding an iPod 4G out in her trembling hands.<p>

He swallowed thickly.

So she had gotten his gift after all.

It probably wasn't the most creative way of asking someone out and had likely been done a hundred times before, but there really wasn't anything more fitting for the two of them. So Natsu had bought a second-hand Nano, a pack of fake stick-on jewels from the convenience store, and spent three hours online picking out songs to add to the playlist. He had then bribed Hibiki Lates from the computer engineering department to make it so that they playlist was out of order, and then had left the gift on her doorstep two days later after several prep-talks.

He had told himself that the worst that could happen was that she would say no and never speak to him again, but all that had served to do was stress him out more, because he honestly couldn't imagine not talking to her every day, be it face to face or from the comforts of their balconies.

Natsu took the iPod from Lucy gingerly, and immediately went to the 'songs' icon. He knew where her response would be.

There was one album, entitled 'Natsu', and he didn't break eye contact from her as he pressed it. She was flushed and biting her lip nervously. A small part of Natsu wondered how she would react if he swooped down and soothed her certainly aching lips with his own, and he shook that thought away just as quickly as it had come. Now was totally not the time.

There was only one song in the album.

Yes I Will.

* * *

><p>AN: **My regular readers are probably recovering from a coronary because _what do you mean she's written NaLu?_

I know, surprise, surprise, NaLu is my OTP and this is literally only the second fic I've ever written for them. Hope it's passable.

I don't think I need to say this but I mean, might as well: I don't own any of the songs mentioned in this fic, I literally had to Google some of them.

I'm sorry if it seemed rushed at all to you!

-Touko

End
file.